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# PRESS CLIPS

BY JAMES LEDBETTER

## Morris the Cad

It was almost touching. New York's four-letter columnists, Dowd and Orin, reached across the political gulf separating the *Times* and the *Post*, and united in a bittersweet moment of Republican feminism. Last Thursday, both Maureen Dowd and Deborah Orin embraced the view—first advanced by eight Republican Congresswomen—that Bill Clinton's advisor Dick Morris should be fired because he recently did consulting work for a man indicted for rape.

This was, as Dowd noted, the latest semidesperate attempt by GOP Congresswomen to "spruce up Mr. Dole gender-wise, but they have a good feminist point." Dowd accepts the GOP's double-standard charge: "Ordinarily, in a case like this, the Democratic women would be yelping, but there was only the occasional brave mutter." Orin pinned a similar rap on the media, transmitting charges from unnamed Republicans who "insist it would be Page One everywhere if Morris worked for, say, Newt Gingrich."

Orin is half-right: the Morris-rape trial story has received comparatively little press attention. One of the bizarre byproducts of campaign coverage is that Beltway columnists spend the day enveloped in clouds of gossip, and end up weighing in on tales before average readers have heard even the basic facts.

So for those who missed it: in 1995, Dick Morris—who's traditionally worked for GOP candidates—accepted a \$25,000 consulting fee to do some polling on behalf of the infamous Alex Kelly of Darien, Connecticut. In 1986, Kelly was charged with raping two teenage girls; he fled to Europe and has, with much fanfare, recently returned to plead innocent.

According to Dan Mangan of the *Stamford Advocate*, Kelly hired Morris in May 1995 to canvass local residents to see if their feelings toward Kelly were so tainted that he should ask to move the trial elsewhere, which he did, unsuccessfully. Mangan points out that Morris's involvement was on the public record more than a year ago, when every national paper was profiling Morris—but no one picked up on the story.

Now, hearing hopeful echoes of Willie Horton, the GOP says Morris's work was an outrage. "It is the *worst* thing an adviser to the President could be doing at a time when crime and crimes against women are such a deep concern to the American people," wrote GOP Representative Jennifer Dunn, quoted

approvingly by Dowd.

I won't shed a tear if Dick Morris has to spend the rest of the campaign toiling in Kathie Lee's sweatshop. But let's not pretend that this anti-Morris fever is brought on by a feminist weighing of the facts, or by anything more than Beltway spin-du-jour. Even if Kelly proves to be guilty, the fact is that, for Republican consultants like Morris, working for a mere rapist is pretty saintly. If presidential candidates start dumping consultants on the basis of how their past clients have harmed women, there's going to be a lot of empty space in campaign offices.

Take, for example, Roger Stone and Paul Manafort, who, when they're not charming snakes on Dole's behalf, chase after any dictators and torturers whose checks won't bounce. In Angola, the UNITA rebels have been known for systematic rape, bayonetting, and murder of women and children. Why not ask Messrs. Stone and Manafort if their richly rewarding lobby work for UNITA helps "spruce up Mr. Dole, gender-wise"? Other tyrants whose images Stone and Manafort have helped launder in Washington include the governments of Kenya and Nigeria. The latter has of late provided enough slaughter of Ogoni women to fill a year's worth of *Times* op-eds; these victims could probably only make it into Dowd's column if they'd been raped and murdered on the sales floor of Barney's. It may be one of the conventional stupidities of the American press that helping someone defend an accused Connecticut rapist arouses more ire than helping a sovereign state cover up its slaughter and torture—but don't call that feminism.

## Hello, Ollie!

I am grateful to politician-cum-radio host Jerry Brown for pointing out, at a *Nation* lunch last week, some mischievous provisions of the Antiterrorism Act signed into law last month. Buried in the law's burly language is a Congressional finding that "international terrorism is among the most serious transnational threats faced by the United States and its allies, far eclipsing the dangers posed by population growth or pollution." Though this paragraph is unlikely to have a huge policy impact, it's also pure nonsense. More frightening: "the President should use all necessary means, including covert action and military force, to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy international infrastructure used by international terrorists, including overseas terrorist training facilities and safe havens (emphasis added)."

It's hard to deny Brown's conclusion that this sweeping language amounts to a vir-

tual Tonkin Gulf resolution to justify any skulduggery the executive branch wants to carry out. "What Reagan and Oliver North did illegally, any President now has the legal authority to do," warns Brown. In the volumes of coverage and commentary this law has received—much of it critical—I have not seen anyone else make this point.

## Eat It, Too

On May 23, the lead *New York Post* editorial endorsed "The sanctity of marriage" against those bad, bad homosexuals who want to tie the knot but still keep, in the words of departing *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan, "extramarital outlets." This, scolded the *Post*, "is another way of saying that homosexuals want to have their wedding cakes, as well as whatever financial and social advantages accrue to married couples." Traditional, fidelity-centered marriage, the *Post* edit insisted, "is still society's most proven way to rear and socialize children; it should not be transformed into an empty ceremony designed to give rise to health-insurance benefits."

Since the *Post* is taken seriously by the Republican politicians whom it supports, I urge editorial page editor Eric Breindel to fax this stirring paean to marriage to Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich, Al D'Amato, and Rudy Giuliani—and to the first wives they left behind. Also, Breindel should make sure his boss, Rupert Murdoch—who dumped his first wife and daughter 30 years ago to take up with a cub reporter from the *Daily Mirror*—gets a copy. While he's at it, Breindel might want to shoot a copy of this sanctimonious sermon about marriage sanctity to Tamar Jacoby—his ex-wife.

## Clipboard

★ Headlines from Thursday's dailies: "Report: Cafeterias Are Filthy" (*Newsday*, page 1); "NOT FIT TO SERVE: Threat to shut 125 cafeterias as thousands fail hygiene tests" (*Daily News*, page 1); "NOT FIT TO EAT: Old food, filthy kitchens, unsafe cooking in schools" (*Post*, page 1); "Health Inspectors Find Most School Cafeterias Clean and Their Food Safe" (*Times*, p. B3). A diversity of views, of course, is theoretically why we want to have several papers, but maybe *Times* metro editors should spend a week dining at JHS 111 where, according to the *News*, the fare includes "dead roaches mixed with peanut butter." . . . ★ I am about to embark on a six-week book leave. There may or may not be fabulous replacements; intense negotiations are underway. See you in mid July. ♦  
Research: Deirdre A. Hussey

## RICHARD ROUILARD, 1953-1996

Quite rightly, obituaries have credited Richard Rouilard, who died of AIDS on May 8, with boosting the influence of gay and lesbian journalism. As editor of *The Advocate*, Rouilard transformed what had been a quintessential gay-ghetto rag into a must-read in newsrooms across the country.

He also became the impresario of a journalistic gay pride march, turning *The Advocate* into a ribald, hilarious, and passionately political spectacle. Madonna and Oliver Stone participated by giving interviews.

Desert Storm spokesman Pete Williams couldn't avoid Rouilard's parade—he got outed in a cover story.

I remember sitting in his *Advocate* office in L.A., watching in awe as Rouilard worked the phones, his raspy voice tipping off Liz Smith to one scoop while enthusing over another his Washington reporter had just uncovered. I remember thinking that I couldn't imagine him sleeping. I certainly can't imagine him dead. —MARK SCHOOFES

Richard Rouilard wasn't a newspaperman,

but he played one at the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, and in the process turned into the real thing. As style section editor, he conspired with me to keep dance in the forefront of the paper's arts coverage. He went on to *The Advocate* and the L.A. *Times*, meanwhile buying movie star mansions and trading up, so that by the end of his short life he had homes in the best sections of the Big Orange. In his last week, ensconced in the exquisite West Hollywood apartment he shared with Bob Cohen, all he asked for was medication, hugs, and kisses. —ELIZABETH ZIMMER